

think earnestly of his wish for a companion. By-and-by in the shell he heard a very faint cry like that of a newly born child, but which gradually became louder, till at last a little female child was seen, which, growing by degrees larger and larger, was finally married by the raven, and from this union all the Indians were produced, and the country peopled.

The people, however, had many wants, and as yet had neither fire, light, fresh-water, or the oolachen fish. These things were all in the possession of a great chief or deity called Sétlin-ki-jash, who lived where the Nasse River now is. Water was first obtained by Ne-kil-stlas in the following manner. The chief had a daughter, and to her Ne-kil-stlas covertly made love, and visited her many times unknown to her father. The girl began to love Ne-kil-stlas very much, and trust in him, which was what he desired; and at length, when he thought the time ripe, he asked on one occasion for a drink of water, saying that he was very thirsty. The girl brought him the water in one of the closely woven baskets in common use for that purpose; but he drank only a little, and, setting the basket down beside him, waited till the girl fell asleep. Then quickly donning his coat of feathers, and lifting the basket in his beak, he flew out of the opening made for the smoke in the top of the lodge. He was in great haste, fearing to be followed by the people of the chief, and a little water fell out here and there, causing the numerous rivers which are now found; but in the Haida country a few drops only fell, like rain, and so it is that there are no large streams there to-day.

Ne-kil-stlas next wished to obtain fire, which was also in the possession of the same powerful being or chief. He did not dare, however, to appear again in the chief's house, nor did the chief's daughter longer show him favor. Assuming, therefore, the form of a single needle-like leaf of the spruce-tree, he floated on the water near the house; and when the girl—his former lover—came down to draw water, was lifted by her in the vessel she used. The girl, drinking the water, swallowed without noticing it the little leaf, and shortly afterward bore a child, who was no other than the cunning Ne-kil-stlas, who had thus again obtained an entry into the lodge. Watching his opportunity, he one day picked up

a burning brand, and flying out as before by the smoke hole at the top of the lodge, carried it away, and spread fire everywhere.

Similar childish stories serve to explain the origin of light and the prized oolachen fish.

Ne-kil-stlas of the Haidas is represented in function and name by Us-tas of the Carries Tuineh. Of Us-tas an almost endless series of grotesque and often disgusting adventures are related, and analogous tales are repeated about Ne-kil-stlas.

The collection and study of details like these concerning the habits, customs, and thoughts of a people semi-barbarous, and disappearing even before our eyes in the universal menstruum of civilization, may seem to be of little importance. They lead, however, into a wide and interesting region of speculation, embracing the question of the origin and interrelation of the American aborigines, their wanderings, and all the unwritten pages of their history, which we can hope to know even by the most careful inquiry only in dim outlines.

We are led to ask ourselves in particular in regard to the Haidas, what has been the origin of the grotesque but highly conventionalized art which exhibits itself in many of the works of these people, and the social customs which, with a power almost as strong as that of fashion among ourselves, causes them to devote so much of their time to ceremonies apparently meaningless, but which serve to form the bonds and rough working machinery of society among them? Have these been those of a people who,

"Flying, found shelter in the fortunate isles,
And left their usages, their arts and laws,
To disappear by a slow gradual death,
To dwindle and to perish, one by one,
Starved in those narrow bounds"?

or have they been developed slowly in a community separated from the human stock at a very early period? and might they, had they never been brought face to face with a superior power, have grown in the course of ages into an independent civilization like that of Mexico or Peru? We can never hope to answer such questions fully; but in regard to these people of the northwest coast we know that there are on record several instances in which Japanese junks, driven by the prevailing winds and currents, have been carried across the whole breadth of the North Pa-